P 100186E2388

FADRC

1897

December 15, 1978

Dear Mr. Dingell:

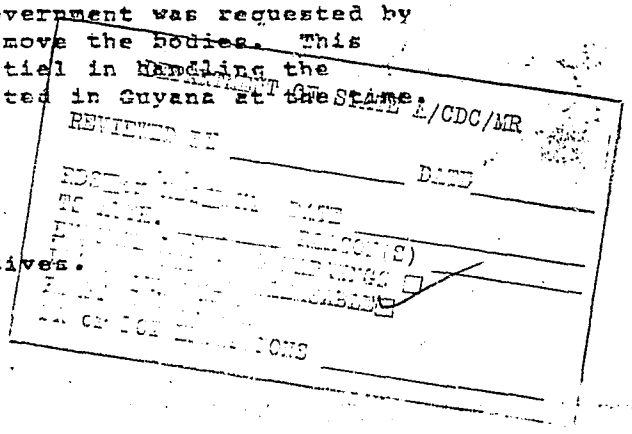
Thank you for your letter of December 4, in which you urge the State Department to pursue legal inquiry into the costs incurred by the United States in response to the Guyana tragedy. As you know, the United States Government continues to be involved in this tragic episode and is investigating various aspects of the situation. Nevertheless, I wanted to give you an early response to the questions you have raised concerning this unprecedented matter.

On Sunday, November 19, it had become clear that the United States Government was facing a major crisis in Guyana. An American Congressman and other Americans in his party had been killed. A settlement believed to include over 1,000 Americans was involved, and its situation was uncertain. It was apparent that the Government of Guyana required assistance in handling a major emergency created by the presence of Americans within its borders.

The President, acting under his constitutional authority as Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, ordered the departments of our government to take action to deal with this emergency. The operational decisions within the U.S. Government in this unique situation were made by the Secretary of State in conjunction with some of his Cabinet colleagues.

Under the President's Executive authorities, medical evacuation for injured Americans was immediately ordered, and the United States Government offered assistance to the Government of Guyana to prevent further loss of life. As events progressed, it became clear that there were large numbers of Americans dead. For a time, it was believed that there were survivors in the jungle; and the United States adjusted and increased its assistance to help the search by Guyana police and military. Finally, when the full scope of the tragedy of Jonestown was clear, our Government was requested by the Government of Guyana to remove the bodies. This operation was considered essential in handling the emergency situation which existed in Guyana at the time.

The Honorable
John D. Dingell,
House of Representatives.



The Justice Department is fully exploring possible legal remedies which can be used to recover the cost the U.S. Government has incurred in removing and processing the bodies of Americans from Guyana. Now that the emergency is substantially over, the Office of Management and Budget and other agencies are reviewing the various operations to determine the exact cost to the United States Government. Although the costs to the United States Government of an effort of this magnitude obviously are considerable, they are substantially less than the $8 million figure used in some press reports. Please be assured that we will report fully to appropriate congressional committees on these aspects of the operation upon completion of our review. Meanwhile, the Justice Department will make all efforts to recover the costs to the U.S. Government.

If you have any further questions, you may wish to contact Deputy Assistant Secretary John Bushnell. His telephone is 632-8562.

Sincerely,

DB/ow

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

ARA/PPC:JSchreiber:mbb
12/14/78:x23722

0181-0159

Clearances: Inter-Agency
ARA:GLister
ARA:JBushnell
H:ENef
EN/ow

14394

JOHN D. DINGELL
16TH DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
ROOM 2221, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-4071

DISTRICT OFFICE:
4917 SCHAEFER ROAD
DEARBORN, MICH. 48126
(313) 846-1276

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEES:
INTERSTATE AND FOREIGN COMMERCE
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND POWER
MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES
SMALL BUSINESS
MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

December 4, 1978

ACTION
is assigned to
ARA

Mr. Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for Congressional
Affairs
Department of State
Room 7251
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Mr. Bennet:

There is rising concern throughout the country with the enormous costs incurred by the U. S. Government with respect to the Guyana incident. I agree with many who feel that the ultimate responsibility of the overall costs incurred should rest with the Peoples Temple.

I urge that the State Department pursue legal inquiry into this matter. What has become an enormous cost should not be borne solely by those who are in no way responsible for this tragedy.

With every good wish,

Sincerely yours,

John D. Dingell
Member of Congress

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS
FA/DC

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1978 DEC 7 PM 12 05

(1)

THIS STATIONERY PRINTED ON PAPER MADE WITH RECYCLED FIBERS